

Montana State Fiscal Stabilization Application – Phase 2
August 27, 2012

Assurance (b) Improving Collection and Use of Data

IV and V. INDICATORS b(2) and b(3)

State Plan Instructions: For each assurance indicator or descriptor under education reform areas (a), (c), and (d) for which the State is not able to fully collect or publicly report annually the required data or information (as indicated in Part 3A), please attach a plan that provides:

- Indicators b(2): Whether the State provides student growth data on their current students and the students they taught in the previous year to, at a minimum, teachers of reading/language arts and mathematics in grades in which the State administers assessments in those subjects in a manner that is timely and informs instructional programs.
- Indicator b(3): Whether the State provides teachers of reading /language arts and mathematics in grades in which the State administers assessments in those subjects with reports of individual teacher impact on student achievement on those assessments

The process and timeline for developing and implementing, as soon as possible, but no later than September 30, 2011, the means to fully collect and/or publicly report (as required) the data or information, including:

- The milestones that the State establishes toward developing and implementing those means;
- The date by which the State expects to reach each milestone;

Milestone	Completion Date	Completed
Survey test coordinators in school systems to capture information on the use of the Montana Analysis and Reporting System (MARS) tools and any barriers to usage of the tools	May 2010	✓
Based on survey responses, develop a plan for promoting the expanded use of the MARS tools	On-going	✓
Identify and convene task force to propose state standards for the systems that local education agencies use to evaluate licensed educators	May 2012	✓
State Board of Public Education (BPE) adopts standards for the systems that local education agencies use to evaluate licensed educators	September 2012	
Promote the state's goal to provide student growth data to classroom teachers through OPI communication tools, training sessions and conferences	On-going	✓
Drawing on the expertise of school personnel who are making extensive use of the MARS tools, design query tools, data export tools, and guidance to share with all school systems	December 2010	✓

Current Status:

Montana's testing contractor, Measured Progress, Inc, provides software to school districts to review and analyze student achievement data. The Montana Analysis and Reporting System (MARS) is a web-based reporting system which supports the interactive disaggregation of data into subgroups of students and/or test items; provides tabular and graphic displays of results; and permits users to export data in a variety of formats. The OPI provides a user name and password to the test coordinator in each of Montana's 317 public school systems and state-funded schools. The test coordinator manages accounts within MARS for school principals and any other individuals in the school system that are given access to student assessment results. The district is able to set up accounts for every teacher in the school through the MARS system and assign students to teachers for reporting and analysis purposes.

Users of the MARS system are able to filter information based on grade levels, content areas (reading, mathematics, and science), student subgroups and other student demographic information. The system also provides for item analysis and performance level summaries. The longitudinal data feature allows a user to see a student's scores and proficiency levels in prior years (given the student participated in the statewide student assessment).

The MARS system provides robust functionality for principals and teachers to review student assessment results. The MARS software allows local school systems to provide student growth data to teachers on their current students and students they taught in the previous year. However, the OPI has concerns that the reporting and analysis tools are under-utilized either because of lack of time or training by school personnel. While the OPI provides training in a number of formats for school districts (training manuals, webinars, on-site training), at the state level, the OPI does not know the extent to which the MARS tools are used by educators.

The MARS system allows for the export of data to PDF and Excel formats. Some school districts have made extensive use of these export features to prepare reports for teachers and teams of teachers. These districts have also provided sessions at the annual OPI Assessment Conference to share best practices with educators from other school districts.

Expanding the Usage of MARS

In order to gauge the current usage of the MARS tool, the OPI surveyed test coordinators about how the MARS tool is used in the school system and by whom. In 2009-2010, test coordinators and teachers participating in test development activities responded to surveys and participated in focus groups regarding the use of MARS and how best to meet their needs for accessing student test data. Their responses have provided the shell for wider dissemination at the annual statewide assessment conference and online; however, survey respondents and focus group participants strongly recommended online training which could be used by schools and districts on their own or in collaboration with OPI via live webinars and /or conference calls. In response to those suggestions, the OPI developed a series of prerecorded webinars. Those webinars are intended to be a vehicle both for training trainers and expanded use. Among the five modules are two specifically for training trainers (MARS Training and Demonstration Data) and one specifically for use by classroom teachers, "Impact Instruction." Between now and September

30, 2011, the OPI will continue to focus its efforts on getting more input from test coordinators, system and school administrators, counselors, and teachers to increase and make effective use of the existing tools to provide assessment data to teachers about their students. Over the longer term, the State will evaluate its options for how to provide principals and teachers with access to the student growth data and reports of individual teacher impact. The OPI has an IES longitudinal data systems grant to design and implement a K-12 education data warehouse. The warehouse, once implemented, will provide the state with greater options for making query and analysis tools available to school personnel.

Defining Individual Teacher Impact

As part of the Board of Public Education's review of Chapter 55 of the state accreditation standards for schools, the board formed a working group to discuss essential components of the teacher evaluation process. The working group (and now the larger task force) has recommended a set of standards for the evaluation of educators by local school systems. One element of the evaluation system focuses on how well the educator “understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and the guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision-making.” Another element of the evaluation system focuses on how well the educator “engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his or her practice, particularly in the effects of his or her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.”

The technology to provide teachers with reports on student performance can be built by drawing on the capabilities of MARS and the Montana K-12 education data warehouse. The data warehouse implementation is scheduled for completion by June 30, 2013.

Describe any obstacles that may prevent the State from developing and implementing those means by September 30, 2011, including but not limited to requirements and prohibitions of State law and policy;

The Office of Public Instruction does not face any statutory requirements, prohibitions or policies that may prevent it from developing and implementing this plan. However, the adoption of a definition and measure of teacher performance will involve a number of stakeholders, including the Board of Public Education, which has constitutional authority for the general supervision of schools. The process outlined in this plan will be contingent on the collaboration toward and acceptance of shared goals among the stakeholders.

The OPI has limited resources to provide training in the use of the MARS reporting and analysis tool. The State will need to make efficient use of electronic resources to provide training and promote the use of the MARS tools.

- *The nature and frequency of reports that the State will provide to the public regarding its progress in developing and implementing those means;*

The OPI has created a web page where it provides quarterly status reports to the public on the

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state's progress in meeting the [State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program's indicators](#). In addition, the OPI will be providing semi-annual reports to the interim Legislative Finance Committee on its progress in meeting the four assurances under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The first report was provided to the Legislative Fiscal Division in November 2009 and presented to the Legislative Finance Committee in December 2009. The December report is posted at: http://www.leg.mt.gov/css/fiscal/PM_Agency.asp.

The state assessment office distributes a monthly electronic newsletter to testing coordinators and other interested parties. The [JUMP newsletter](#) will be used to promote 1) the greater usage of the MARS tools, 2) the state's goal of providing student growth data to teachers, and 3) the dialogue around defining and measuring individual teacher impact.

- *The amount of funds the State is using or will use to develop and implement those means, and whether the funds are or will be Federal, State, or local funds.*

The State uses the federal assessment grant funds to provide training to school personnel on use of the MARS tools. The federal funding pays for staff positions and for travel and materials. Some state general fund dollars also support these efforts by funding the State Assessment Director's position. No new funds have been identified for this project.

Furthermore, the plan must satisfy the following general requirements:

- (A) Describe the agency or agencies in the State responsible for the development, execution, and oversight of the plan, including the institutional infrastructure and describe the capacity of the agency or agencies as they relate to each of those tasks;*

The Office of Public Instruction is responsible for the development, execution and oversight of this plan. The existing capacity is described above under Current Status.

- (B) Describe the agency or agencies, institutions, or organizations, if any, providing technical assistance or other support in the development, execution, and oversight of the plan, and describe the nature of such technical assistance or other support;*

It will be critical to involve Montana's K-12 education partners in the discussion and determination of individual teacher impact. It is likely that Montana will seek technical assistance from other states and the education research community about how to measure individual teacher impact.

- (C) Provide the overall budget for the development, execution, and oversight of the plan.*

No new funds have been identified for this project.

- (D) Describe the way the State will publicly report the plan and the State's progress reports on its plan, including the nature and frequency of updated reports to the public on State actions taken under the plan and the website where the State will make the plan and*

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progress reports publicly available (as defined in the Notice of Final Requirements, Definitions, and Approval Criteria for the SFSF Phase II).

The OPI home page includes a link to "Recovery Act News," where the agency provides quarterly status reports to the public on the state's progress in meeting the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund program's indicators. In addition, the OPI will be providing semi-annual reports to the interim Legislative Finance Committee on its progress in meeting the four assurances under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.